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Dear Dr Alexander

FOI REQUEST: FOI 370 – MONITORING OF WHISTLEBLOWING GOVERNANCE

Further to your request via e-mail relating to the above topic our response to which is set out below:-

For clarity purposes we wish to inform you that the Trust operates two systems:

- a) Which is managed by the Human Resources Department who deal with formal Whistleblowing declarations under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and
- b) A Raising Concerns process where staff are able to receive support via various channels – Ambassador for Cultural Change, direct access to CEO/Directors or via a dedicated helpline – manned by the Corporate Business Manager.

1. "Collect data on the nature and number of concerns raised"

Yes for both systems we have a process to capture this information. At present there are no logged cases under system (a). With regards to system (b) this system is being developed in terms of how cases can be reported without indicating the identity of the individual raising the concern.

2. "Is there evidence of constructive and timely feedback?"

System (a) – not applicable

System (b) – the Trust has some improvements to make in this respect as we have received feedback via the Ambassador for Cultural Change that staff do not feel that feedback is always as timely as they would expect. The Trust is now putting a "progress chasing" system in place to improve on this.

3. "Have there been any difficulties with confidentiality?"

Not that we are aware of. We are confident that any issues of this nature would be raised via the Ambassador for Cultural Change, the Director of Workforce & Development or our Trade Union colleagues.

4. "Have any events come to the board's attention that might indicate that a staff member has not been fairly treated as a result of raising a concern?"

No.

The Ambassador for Cultural Change makes a quarterly report to the Quality Governance Committee on the themes and trends of concerns that have been raised; she is able to and does speak freely at this meeting and has not raised any concern of unfair treatment as a consequence of raising a concern. She also has direct access to the Chairman of the Trust (who is a lay member) to raise any concerns she may have and to any member of the Board.

5. "Could the issues have been picked up or resolved earlier? If so, why weren't they?"

Not applicable.

6. "Information from exit interviews"

We do collect information from Exit Interviews and we have recently undertaken an exercise to identify why we had higher levels than expected of staff leaving from our District Nursing Teams. This analysis identified that staff were not receiving the support they felt they needed as new members of staff – as a consequence we have completely reviewed our "on boarding" process and local induction process to ensure that improvements are made.

We are currently reviewing the whole Exit Interview process as completion of the questionnaire is very low.

7. "Information from...PIDA or other legal claims"

We had one claim registered under an Early Conciliation Certificate but this was quickly resolved with the support of ACAS and the claim withdrawn – the member of staff has remained with the organisation.

8. Survey staff experience, using these questions:

The Trust is obligated to undertake an annual staff opinion survey the questions of which are mandated by the Department of Health. The results are published nationally and considered by the Care Quality Commission, NHS Trust Development Authority and Local Clinical Commissioning Groups as part of their inspection/contract requirements.

The questions that relate to whistleblowing/raising concerns in that survey are attached at Appendix A.



SOS - Raising
Concerns.pdf

The Trust actively encourages staff to raise concerns and has promoted this by:

- i. The CEO attends the monthly Trust welcome day and talks about a culture of openness and staff feeling able to raise issues
- ii. Producing a DVD – fronted by the Ambassador for Cultural Change and the CEO which talks about the Ambassador role and signposts staff to where they can receive support if they have concerns – this is shown to all new starters to the Trust and at our last audit 61% of all staff had seen this DVD and 75% of all of our managers had received training in how to deal effectively and sensitively with staff who raised concerns.

9. If your organisation has monitored whether staff have "not been fairly treated as a result of raising a concern?", please could you advise what data parameters are used, and specifically whether disciplinary action, suspensions and dismissals of staff, subsequent to their raising of concerns, are monitored.

No data currently available which has had this analysis conducted on it.

10. If your organisation has collected the above recommended data, whether in full or partially, and or if it has collected other monitoring data on whistleblowing governance, please could you share all your data for years 2013 and 2014.

We are developing a data collection system.

I hope that we have responded appropriately to your request but if you wish to have the decision reviewed you should write to: Security and Governance Manager, Information Governance Team, Morston House, The Midway, Newcastle-under-Lyme Staffordshire ST5 1QG.

If, following an internal review you are not satisfied with the outcome you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future correspondence regarding this request.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Heath

Freedom of Information Officer
For Stuart Poynor, Chief Executive